



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Prevention Tips to Avoid Illness from Spoiled Foods

BALTIMORE, MD (August 26, 2011) -- With the approach of Hurricane Irene, power outages and flooding are a real possibility. The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) realizes that food spoilage could become an issue. In order to decrease the chances of illness the DHMH Office of Food Protection and Consumer Services makes the following recommendations:

- * Perishable foods without refrigeration (and from the freezer) that have a temperature of 40 degrees Fahrenheit and above for two hours should be discarded; this includes meats, milk, yogurt, eggs, mayonnaise and cream dressings, pastas, and desserts.
- * Food items that can be kept for a **limited time** without refrigeration include: hard cheeses (Cheddar, Swiss, Provolone, Romano and Parmesan); Butter and Margarine; Opened canned fruits and fruit juices; Peanut butter, jellies, jams; Mustard and vinegar based dressings; Bread products like rolls, muffins, bagels, waffles; and herbs, spices and raw vegetables.
- * It is okay to refreeze foods **if** the item still contains ice crystals and feels cold and hard to the touch. This includes: meats, seafood products, juices, casseroles, egg products, cheeses, vegetables, pastries and frozen meals.
- * Discard all foods that come in contact with floodwaters **including canned goods**. Thoroughly wash all kitchen utensils, pots, plates, etc., after contact with floodwater with hot soapy water and sanitize them by boiling in clean water or immersing them in a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water for 15 minutes.
- * When discarding spoiled foods place them in double plastic bags closed with ties. Place in animal and bird proof trashcans.
- * As a rule an unopened, well functioning freezer half full will keep foods safely for up to 24 hours. A fully stocked freezer, unopened can keep foods safely for 48 hours.
- * Use common sense when dealing with the issue of possible food spoilage:
Do not taste foods to see if they are spoiled --- If in doubt throw it out.

In the interests of public health, County and State Health Officials will be making random checks on retail facilities in the effected areas to ensure that the above guidelines are being followed.

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